

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

DIVISION OF STATEWIDE PLANNING

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May 15, 2002

Chris and Linda Branham
Royal Wolf Lodge
P.O. Box 191007
Anchorage, AK 99519

Subject: Igiugig airport extension

Dear Mr. and Ms. Branham:

Thank you for your letter of March 25. We appreciate the information you have provided to us concerning Igiugig and the difficulties inherent in delivering affordable fuel and freight to the community. Let me first explain the plan's recommendations regarding Igiugig, and then how we will address your concerns.

No proposed runway length increase at Igiugig

Igiugig's airport is not listed among the programmed or proposed projects on page 34 of the draft plan; so we are not (at the moment) planning any runway length increase. Igiugig appears in Table 14 on page 35 of the plan to show that it does not currently meet the State's minimum standard for runway length. But as you mentioned, a 300-ft extension wouldn't accomplish much of real import, save perhaps an additional safety margin for takeoffs and landings.

We are limited by the total amount of funding available, and so we have to prioritize in order to meet the most pressing needs first. Our top priority continues to be the need to bring several substandard airports up to minimum standards. While that may be less than what is desired for communities like Igiugig, it is vitally important to other communities around the state. Alaska has seen significant growth in aviation funding over the past few years, and we continue to ask for more.

Freight and fuel delivery analysis

Appendix B of the draft plan suggests that connecting Iliamna Lake via improved road and navigation improvements at Williamsport will greatly reduce the cost and raise the reliability of surface fuel delivery to the communities in the region. This will lessen, but probably not eliminate, the need for fuel delivery by air. We recognize it is not a one-step process - it will require improved barge landing facilities and greater fuel storage capacity as well.

Getting freight to Igiugig

We appreciate your assessment of Igiugig's poor suitability for docking barges and the difficulty of freight delivery by air. You have recommended extending the runway to 4000 feet. We see several possible courses of action:

- No change
- Relocate barge landing to a more suitable site in community
- Road connection to suitable fuel delivery site
- Design an engineering solution to the wind, wave, and current problems
- Pursue delivery exclusively by air
- Find alternative technology for lowering fuel and freight delivery

We know of one recently submitted project that appears to address your concerns about inadequate barge landing capabilities. The Igiugig Village Council nominated to our Department in November 2001 a combined Igiugig Public Dock/Float Plane Access Facility. The Statewide Harbors Engineer evaluated the project using the Department's standard Harbor Project scoring criteria. It received a score of 44. This is comparable to scores received by similar type projects at other locations.

Unfortunately, as the plan points out, the lack of a regular federal funding program to improve ports and harbors hampers the systemic improvement and development of such facilities around the State. Alaska's dock and harbor needs far exceed current funding levels. We do not anticipate scheduling the Igiugig Public Dock/Float Plane Access Facility for construction in the near future.

We are reviewing the plan's aviation analysis and will consider your input with regard to Igiugig airport before finalizing the plan.

We encourage you to continue working with the Igiugig Village Council and the Lake and Peninsula Borough on how best to address specific transportation related needs at Igiugig. If at all possible, there needs to be demonstrated public support at the community and borough levels for road, aviation and dock/harbor projects nominated to our Department. This helps the projects score higher, and scores are the largest factor in determining if and when the projects are scheduled for construction.

Within our Department we encourage you to contact Jack Melton, the Southwest Alaska Area Planner, at (907) 269-0509 or fax (907) 269-0521, email jack_melton@dot.state.ak.us. Jack will be glad to work with you on project nomination procedures.

Sincerely,



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